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WHITMAN ANNOUNCES AVAILABILITY OF LATEST TOXIC RELEASE INVENTORY; INCLUDES NEW "PBT" DATA

Contact: David Deegan, 202-564-7839

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today issued its annual report on the amount of toxic chemicals released into the environment. The report shows that trends of declining overall releases are continuing. Total releases of chemicals nationwide decreased by about 700 million pounds during 2000, the latest year for which data are available. This year's report of the Toxics Release Inventory (or TRI) contains newly-included data on persistent bioaccumulative toxic (PBT) chemicals, such as dioxins, mercury and PCBs, giving communities a more complete picture of the sources of chemicals in their environment. As reported to EPA, total chemical releases into the environment decreased nationwide from 7.8 billion pounds in 1999 to 7.1 billion pounds in 2000. Based on trends since the inception of TRI, chemical releases have decreased approximately 48 percent since 1988.

"The Toxics Release Inventory is a powerful tool to help citizens assess local environmental conditions and to help them make decisions about protecting their environment. I am pleased that we are beginning to provide additional data on persistent bioaccumulative toxic chemicals since they can remain in the environment for extended periods and build up in humans and the environment," said Administrator Christie Whitman. "It will be important for us to use these data in conjunction with other environmental information to analyze trends in environmental indicators at both the national and local levels."

Looking at all chemical releases, approximately 27 percent of chemicals were released to air, 4 percent to water, and 69 percent to land on- and off-site. As in previous years, releases from the metal mining industry in 2000 made up a substantial portion of all chemical releases–47 percent or approximately 3.4 billion pounds. This was a decrease of over 14 percent from their releases in 1999. Releases from manufacturing industries accounted for 32 percent of all releases or about 2.3 billion pounds–a 2.6 decrease from 1999. About 16 percent of the releases were from electric utilities–about 1.15 billion pounds–achieving a 3 percent decrease from 1999.

The 2000 Toxic Release Inventory data and background information on the TRI program are available at: http://www.epa.gov/tri . A special research tool called TRI EXPLORER is available on a link from the web page, enabling users to analyze the data by facility, chemical or industry; and at the county, state or national level. The availability of these data make it possible to gauge progress in reducing toxic chemical pollution.

In 1999 EPA required certain additional persistent bioaccumulative toxic chemicals, including dioxins, to be reported under TRI using a lower reporting threshold than the other TRI chemicals. In that 1999 action, the Agency also established lower reporting thresholds for 13 PBT chemicals already on the inventory.

In filing reporting year 2000 chemical reports, over 600 TRI reporting facilities took advantage of EPA's new

TRI interactive, intelligent reporting software tool, called "TRI-ME" or "TRI Made Easy." The program, which assists facilities in determining and completing their TRI reporting obligations, was made available on a limited basis for 2000 reporting. It has been sent to all TRI reporting facilities for 2001 reporting. TRI-ME is designed both to simplify and expedite reporting, and to improve the quality of the data submitted to TRI.

The Toxics Release Inventory was established under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986. Under that legislation, signed into law by President Reagan, the TRI program requires industrial facilities to publicly report quantities of toxic chemicals annually released into the air, water and land. Overall, TRI includes information on releases and other waste management methods for over 650 toxic chemicals and chemical categories. The data available today are based on reports from manufacturing industries, metal mines, certain coal mining activities, electrical utilities that burn coal and/or oil, hazardous waste treatment and disposal facilities, chemical wholesale distributors, petroleum bulk plants and terminals and solvent recovery services. In total, this year's data are based on approximately 91,500 forms submitted by 23,500 facilities.

TRI annual reports reflect releases and other waste management activities of chemicals, not exposures of the public to those chemicals. The release estimates alone are not sufficient to determine exposure or to calculate potential adverse effects on human health and the environment. The determination of potential risk depends upon many factors, including toxicity, chemical fate after release, release location and population concentrations.

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